

## BIKE BAN for Shanghai

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SHANGHAI, China (AP) --Shanghai plans to ban bicycles from its major roads next year, to make more room for cars, official newspapers have said. Police will also raise fines tenfold for cycling infractions such as running red lights, the Shanghai Daily reported.

Such measures aim to "control the number of bicycles on city streets," it quoted police official Chen Yuangao as saying.

The proposed ban, which extends restrictions already in place on some streets, has prompted protests by some city officials and members of the city's large cycling population, the paper said.

"Bicycles are an environmentally friendly means of transportation that should not be banned," Zhao Guotong, an official of the Shanghai Economic Commission, told the newspaper.

Shanghai should instead "take firm control of the increasing numbers of private cars," Zhao was quoted as saying.

Shanghai, with an urban population of about 20 million, has some 9 million bikes, the paper said. Numbers of new bicycles in the city grew by 1 million this year.

Bicycles were long kings of the road in China, hailed by the country's communist leaders as the perfect proletarian transport: cheap, efficient and egalitarian.

Like other cities, Shanghai, which boasted some of China's earliest bicycle factories, designated special bike lanes on main roads and built bicycle parking lots.

In recent years, though, Shanghai has developed into a center of China's burgeoning auto industry, and growing affluence has spurred private car buying.

Numbers of private vehicles in Shanghai nearly doubled to 142,801 at the end of last year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. The figure is expected to top 200,000 by the end of this year, according to Shanghai media reports.

That accounts for only a small percentage of vehicles on the road, though: Private automobiles are outnumbered six to one by buses, taxis, government cars, and commercial vehicles, according to the official newspaper Liberation Daily.

City officials have tried to limit the numbers of new cars by raising registration fees and restricting access to the city center. Nevertheless, police officials cited the need to control two wheelers as the key to reducing gridlock, accusing them of ignoring traffic lights and occupying vehicle lanes. "Bicycles put great pressure on the city's troubled traffic situation," Shanghai Daily quoted Chen, the police official, as saying.

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